



Administrative

- VTEL: We (Okemo Valley TV) intervened in the Certificate of Public Good (CPG) renewal application with the Public Utility Commission (PUC), representing the interests of the 6 community / PEG access stations contracting with VTel. With the help of Lauren-Glenn Davitian on behalf of the Vermont Access Network, I submitted what's called pre-filed testimony. Given my / our party status in the case, all communications related to it from here on out must be submitted through the PUC. To read the pre-filed testimony or any other documentation related to the case, go here: <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/64/172854/FV-Case%20Summary-Portal>
- New hire: Peter van Gorder has been hired as a part-time Field Producer. He is a new local resident, who moved from California. He has a diverse set of skills, with a background in video production, audio engineering, and building websites.
- Finance plan: The Finance Committee met recently to discuss short-term investment options, such as Treasury Bonds. This would be a good way to make use of the positive cash flow that we are now experiencing. We are in as good of a position in that realm as we have been in quite some time.

Equipment & Website Upgrades

- Website Planning: Our site has been built on the complex Content Management System Drupal since 2007. We have gone through several versions and, for the last 7 years, we have been on a version that has run well but is now no longer supported. The more complicated "back-end" work is performed by a contractor, Joe Golden, who has worked for us for many years. It is not in our best interest to continue down the Drupal path. There are other, better options. As I see it, the best option is to join a cooperative called Localez, which was founded several years ago by Emily Frazier, through her company First Turns Media. She is a long-time colleague who was our first web contractor, and got us set up on Drupal many years ago. What's great about the Localez platform is that it is focused on our niche- the distribution & aggregation of community media & video. She is running the business end of things with her brother, Drew, another long-time colleague. In addition to joining the cooperative, which would have a nominal annual cost, we can hire Localez to migrate our site and all the content on it from Drupal, an area of their expertise. I received a proposal from them for this work; the total cost is \$2,425. They would start the work in late May, with site launch in August. There would then be the annual membership fee, as well as optional subscription services, totaling somewhere between \$2 – 3,000. I will have more specifics on this soon. For comparison purposes, over the last few fiscal years, our annual expenses on our Drupal-based site have fluctuated, from under \$1,000 to over \$10,000. Over the course of the last 10 years, the average has been approx. \$3,000.
- Video-on-demand: We have run into storage issues with our video-on-demand (VOD) server. The way it is set up with our vendor (Cablecast), we have 2 separate servers for

broadcast / playout and for VOD. They work in tandem. When a show is entered into the system, the broadcast file is stored on the playout server; if we want it to also be VOD for the website, we check a box, the file gets copied over to the VOD server, then “transcoded” to a more compressed version for the web. The VOD files need to live on the server, even though when you watch a video on the website, it is actually playing “in the cloud” (Amazon). All of the files need to live locally. And after 7 years of storing VOD files on that server, we finally ran out of space. We have A LOT of external storage that could be used, but unfortunately, I have recently discovered that the server we have is not capable of accessing external storage! I have a temporary work-around established, whereby I’ve moved all pre-2020 VOD off of the VOD server; this means, of the time being, no video before 1/1/2020 can be played from the website. If you try, you will get an error. We need a new solution. The simplest one is to go with the existing vendor and purchase an upgraded server. This is something we would be budgeting to do within the next year anyway, since the existing equipment will be 8 years old in September (our planned replacement schedule). In light of the current situation with VOD storage, I am recommending that we expedite this and not wait. Cablecast has some “B-stock” options (opened but unused boxes) that would come with some favorable pricing – better than purchasing brand new. I await the fine details, but it looks like we would be right around \$20,000. We were over \$36,000 when we purchased the playout & VOD servers (with installation) new in 2015.

- Streaming Platforms: The Okemo Valley TV app is now, officially, live across all of the main “over-the-top” (OTT) streaming platforms: Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, Google Play, and mobile (iOS & Android). The app is free for anyone to download on any one of these platforms. Right now on the app there is a handful of video-on-demand content plus the live 24/7 streams of our 2 TV channels. So anyone who watches TV over one of these streaming platforms can “tune in”. This includes all of the cable TV “cord cutters”! We have been behind with marketing lately, but there needs to be a marketing campaign around this.
- Town AV systems: There are now systems in place in Ludlow, Plymouth, & Mount Holly. The first two were installed by Boston Soundworks; those have been in place for a couple of months at this point. The Mount Holly one was just installed this week, by Unique Media Systems. However, none of these are 100% complete, an issue that has consumed a considerable amount of my time. I have acted as a de facto point person and project manager on each of these; at the onset, I considered the ends to justify the means, but, now it feels like I have inherited too much of the responsibility, particularly with the problems in the Ludlow Town Hall. There have been occasions where Board meetings have been held up due to technical issues, and one recent Development Review Board (DRB) meeting that needed to be postponed (in fact, that made it two consecutive DRB meetings that were inconvenienced). The good news is that we are very close to having the Ludlow system fully functional. Through trial & error, and lots of troubleshooting, and installing of different pieces of hardware, I am just about there. And I will be going over to the Mount Holly Town Office early next week to finish installing what the installers didn’t get to (unfortunately, they ran out of time and were not able to complete the job before this week’s Selectboard meeting, when we were hoping to use it for the first time). As for the Plymouth system, we are going to continue to use it as is for the next couple of months; then, the whole building will be under major renovation, so we won’t be using it at all (we will have to go back to bringing our own portable equipment for the time being).

Fundraising

- Underwriting: I have reached out to all of my contacts for this year (some multiple times). So far this year we have 3 underwriters, all of them returning from last year: William Raevis / VT Properties, Marylou Scofield Esq., and HWC Financial. And this just in: Noah just submitted a donation an underwriter through his new business, Open Door Vacation Rentals. That will brings us up to four. I have not heard from anyone else about your outreach so I can only guess that there is no news.
- Grant opportunity: There is a very promising grant opportunity we need to pursue. It is for the Vermont Arts Council's "Cultural Facilities" grant with a May 1 deadline, We have received two previous Cultural Facilities Grants. There would either be one two-fold application (filed jointly with the Town) for the building or two separate applications: one, from Okemo Valley TV, for interior fit-up and one from the Town for exterior work. The interior need is to build out the media classroom and edit suites with a sound booth, sound absorption, doors, flooring, walls, ceiling, AV & IT. The amount of exterior work that is needed is extensive. The most critical, to be included in an application, are for a snow guard on the rear roof line, drainage around the building, and paving. (We did not receive a definitive answer about whether or not paving was included in the Town's final approved budget).

Programming & Production

- Town Meeting Day: The eve before Town Meeting Day (Monday night) is historically a very challenging night, pushing us to the brink of our human & equipment resources. This year, with a couple of the new systems in place (in Ludlow and Plymouth), plus going live from one of them (Ludlow), and a new employee (Peter) working solo in Mount Holly, there were a number of possible vulnerabilities. Thankfully, we had a very capable volunteer in Noah helping out in Ludlow. This allowed me to be able to react to any issue that came up and to "float" as necessary. But, we pulled it off! There was some trouble with the live feed at the beginning of the Ludlow meeting, but I was able to work that out within the first 10 minutes. With that being the only main issue, I chalked the night out to be a big (albeit tiring) success. Where I would have like to have spent resources but couldn't was on other types of Town Meeting-related coverage, such as candidate forums or interviews, and interview-style shows on Town budgets and other hot topics, leading up to Town Meeting.
- Legislative Updates: We have continued to record weekly updates with Rep. Tesha Buss (Woodstock-Plymouth-Reading) throughout the session, but took 2 weeks off recently, picking it back up this week. During the legislative Town Meeting break, I recorded a series of short interviews with new State Senator Becca White. And I am reaching out other legislators about recording with us
- Reading: For the last couple of years, we have carried the Reading Planning Commission & Zoning Board meetings. They happen remotely; the recordings are submitted to us. Now, there is some interest in tapping into our services to support them with hybrid Selectboard meetings and recording them. We will begin this work in April. This is a result of outreach I slowly began performing in Town, and has been building over the last 2 years, This is related to some of the discussion we wanted to have with SAPA re: collaboration. We will need to figure out how to approach that, in terms of strategy & execution, in the coming months.
- The Speckers: Musicians John Specker of Andover and his daughter Ida started performing in our studio (mostly on fiddle) back when we first opened the doors in our new space in 2014. Recently, they have been coming in on a regular basis. Along with Susan (Leader)-John's wife & Ida's mother – they are strong advocates for Okemo Valley TV. In fact, Susan

is n Andover Selectboard member who recently spoke up during a Board meeting to go on the record stating her appreciation for the services we provide the Town. She also participated in the Department of Public Service focus group hosted in our studio, related to the VTel CPG renewal, providing a lot of compelling testimony.

- Schools: The Ludlow Elementary 5th grade & 6th grade classes are each coming into the studio, working on separate class projects.

Buildings & Grounds

- Plumbing to be added: A few months ago, I requested a hot water valve be added to the plumbing in the mechanical room so that our cleaners (and I) could fill up mop buckets with hot water. Before Town Manager Scott Murphy left his post, he told me that the Town's contactor, Master Plumbing, would be doing the job that week – this was a couple of weeks ago. It has not happened yet, nor have I heard anything else. If nothing happens in the meantime, I will follow-up with the new Town Manager, Brendan McNamara, after he gets settled into his new post in April.
- Plumbing / drainage problems: Not to sound like a broken record, but our building has some plumbing and drainage issues. Six years ago, there was a major blockage in the sewer junction in the middle of the lot between our building & the Community Center. Sewage backed up into the entryway, and the Town crew needed to come out , dig up the manhole, and clear out the blockage. Well, it has happened again. What a mess. We have historically had low outflow / drainage from the toilet & sink. I am told the reason for this is because there isn't enough pitch from the main sewer line from our building out to the junction. A bigger problem is the lack of surface drainage all along the building, such that, as you all probably are aware, there is a bit of a swale in front of our main entrance. This means that water, mud, & ice pools up right there, creating obvious issues. At the very least, this needs to be addressed.
- Possible paving: (See above, under Fundraising > Grant Opportunity). Paving should go hand-in-hand with improving the drainage. It certainly would do a lot as far as helping to keep our floors (and equipment) cleaner, protecting the integrity of the building, and reducing risk for people (and vehicles) entering & exiting.